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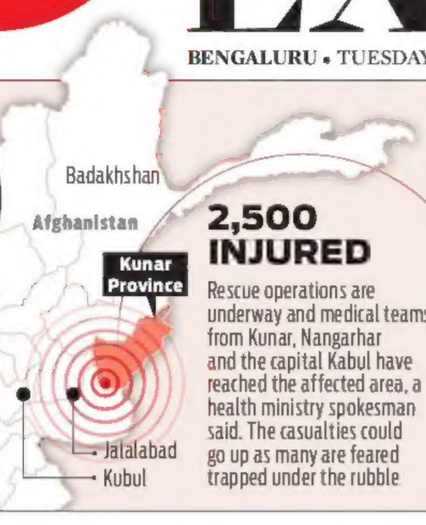
800
DEAD AND COUNTING AS MASSIVE QUAKE JOLTS AFGHANISTAN



The 6.0 earthquake that struck near Afghanistan's Jalalabad on Sunday night has killed 800 people, a Taliban government spokesman said on Monday, adding most of the casualties were in Kunar province

2,500 INJURED
Rescue operations are underway and medical teams from Kunar, Nangarhar and the capital Kabul have reached the affected area, a health ministry spokesman said. The casualties could go up as many are feared trapped under the rubble

8
The earthquake occurred at a depth of just 8 kilometres. Such shallow quakes tend to cause more intense surface shaking

27
The quake's epicentre was 27 kilometres east-northeast of Jalalabad. This placed it close to populated areas, including towns in Kunar province

11.47 PM
On Sunday was when the earthquake struck, catching many people while they were sleeping. This led to the high death toll

3,00,000
Estimated population of the city of Jalalabad, according to municipal estimates. Its larger metropolitan area makes it a significant urban centre near the quake's epicentre

An injured person is carried to a hospital in Mazar Dara, Kunar province | AP

India assures aid
India has started delivering relief materials for earthquake-affected people in Afghanistan, with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar assuring his Afghan counterpart Amir Khan Muttaqi of more supplies

Poor construction
Buildings in Afghanistan tend to be low-rise constructions, mostly of concrete and brick, with homes in rural and outlying areas made from mud bricks and wood. Many are poorly built | P12

PM raps double standards on terror at SCO summit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping | PTI

Jt declaration condemns Pahalgam attack, calls for perpetrators to be brought to justice

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

WITH his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif in attendance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday used the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit to deliver a pointed warning against cross-border terror, calling the recent Pahalgam attack "an open challenge to every country that believes in humanity".

Without naming Pakistan, Modi condemned "open support for terrorism by some countries" and urged SCO member states to take an unambiguous stand. "No double standards on terrorism will be acceptable," he said, warning that the menace must be opposed "in all its forms and colours". The comments come amid renewed concerns in India over Pakistan-based terror networks and their transnational enablers.

"For the past four decades, India has been bearing the grave scars of ruthless terrorism," Modi said adding that the "ugly face of terrorism" was once again visible in the Pahalgam attack, which claimed the lives of 26 innocent tourists in April.

The SCO summit's joint declaration later echoed Modi's tone, with member states condemning the Pahalgam attack and calling for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. It also mentioned two terror attacks in Pakistan.

"We must state it clearly and in one voice: double standards on terrorism are unacceptable. Together, we must oppose terrorism in every form and manifestation. This is our responsibility towards humanity," the prime minister said.

While terrorism dominated Modi's address, he also delivered a veiled message on sovereignty concerns in regional connectivity projects, a likely reference to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which runs through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Without naming any initiative, Modi said connectivity must be based on "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all member states," a long-standing Indian position that implicitly critiques China's Belt and Road projects passing through disputed territory.

"We believe that every effort towards connectivity must uphold the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is also enshrined in the core principles of the SCO Charter. Connectivity, that bypasses sovereignty, ultimately loses both trust and meaning," Modi said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin blamed NATO expansion and what he called the 2014 "coup in Kiev" as root causes of the Ukraine conflict. Chinese President Xi Jinping, meanwhile, took aim at "bullying behaviour" in the global order, calling for a rejection of bloc politics and Cold War mentalities, a stance widely interpreted as criticism of US dominance.

Modi, Putin add to strategic bond

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

IN a strong display of personal rapport and strategic alignment, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a bilateral meeting on Monday amid US pressure over India's Russian oil imports and growing international calls for an end to the war in Ukraine, with Modi expressing support for recent peace efforts and urging all sides to move forward constructively.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the SCO summit, where Modi and Putin walked hand-in-hand toward Chinese President Xi Jinping in a striking image of diplomacy in an increasingly polarised and ready-to-realign global order. Calling each other "dear friend", Modi and Putin held their one-on-one conversation inside the Russian leader's armoured Aurus limousine, a rare gesture reserved for chosen friends and trusted allies.

> **We welcome all recent efforts to bring peace (in Ukraine) and hope that all relevant sides will move forward constructively**
>
> Narendra Modi, prime minister

"Even in the most difficult situations, India and Russia have always walked shoulder to shoulder," Modi said, and added that their close relations are significant for global peace, stability and prosperity.

Putin echoed the sentiment, highlighting a "friendly and trusting" foundation that would guide future cooperation. Addressing Modi, he said, "Dear Prime Minister, my dear friend, Russia and India have for decades maintained special relations of friendship and trust, which is the foundation for our future relationship."

Putin said the India-Russia relations are "politically non-partisan and have the support of the majority of people in both countries". The personal warmth and intent to step up the ties came amid rising tensions in India-US relations, particularly over Washington's tariff response to India's purchases of discounted Russian crude. With the global power centres shifting, Modi's meeting with Putin sent a calibrated message of India pursuing a multipolar strategy, balancing ties with Russia, engaging with the West, and calling for lasting peace in Ukraine.

INDIA TRADE A 'ONE-SIDED DISASTER' FOR USA: TRUMP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

US President Donald Trump, in his latest meltdown, coming just hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Tianjin, called the India-US trade relationship a "totally one-sided" disaster for the US. He then claimed New Delhi offered to cut tariffs on US goods to 'nothing, but it was getting late.

Donald Trump

"We do very little business with India, but they do a tremendous amount of business with us," Trump posted on Truth Social. Trump said because of India's "high tariffs", the trade relationship has been a "totally one-sided disaster" for the US . Trump claimed India has now offered to cut tariffs to nothing, adding, "they should have done so years ago".

It was not just Trump who had a meltdown. His top trade advisor Peter Navarro, who has consistently criticised Delhi, claimed Brahmins are profiteering from Russian oil purchase. "I would just simply say, the Indian people, please understand what's going on here. You got Brahmins profiteering at the expense of the Indian people," he said in an interview.

DHARMASTHALA CHALO

BJP slams govt on SIT; wants NIA to probe 'conspiracy'

VINCENT D'SOUZA @Mangaluru

BJP leaders on Monday criticised the state government for constituting a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the alleged mass burial case in Dharmasthala, claiming that the move was politically motivated and lacked prima facie evidence.

Addressing a massive crowd that had gathered at the temple town from across the state, BJP state president BY Vijayendra alleged that the SIT was set up solely based on a complaint from "a streetwalker" without any preliminary inquiry.

He accused the government of attempting to tarnish the reputation of the Dharmasthala temple and warned against testing the patience of Hindus. "This rally should not be taken lightly. We will not rest until the real conspirators are exposed. We demand a thorough probe by the NIA or CBI," Vijayendra said.

Vijayendra said the Congress has failed to ensure justice for Hindus. "Whenever Siddaramaiah is in power, attacks on Hindu temples rise," he said. P4

BJP'S YATRA WILL NOT PAY POLITICAL DIVIDEND, SAYS CM P4

'Vote theft H-bomb' coming, says Rahul

PREETHA NAIR @ Patna

AS the two-week-long Voter Adhikar Yatra wound up in the Bihar capital on Monday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said his party would soon drop a 'hydrogen bomb' of revelations on the alleged vote theft, following which Prime Minister Modi would not be able to show his face to the nation.

Rahul Gandhi

Addressing a mammoth rally here, Gandhi escalated his fusillade against the Election Commission saying votes were stolen in the Maharashtra Assembly elections, and with evidence, his party showed how 'vote theft' was done in the Mahadevapura Assembly segment in Karnataka's Bangalore Central Lok Sabha seat.

"I want to tell the BJP people. Have you heard of anything bigger than an atom bomb? It is a hydrogen bomb. BJP supporters, be prepared, a hydrogen bomb is on the way. People are soon going to find out the reality of vote theft. I want to tell the youth of Bihar, vote theft means 'snatching away rights, democracy, and employment. They will take away your ration card and other rights," said Gandhi, as the crowd chanted "Vote thieves, leave the chair" — a slogan adopted during the march.

Maintaining that vote theft was an attack on the Constitution and the rights of people, Gandhi said the same forces that killed Mahatma Gandhi are now trying to kill the Constitution. "But we will not allow that to happen at any cost," he asserted.

Braving the scorching heat, tens of thousands of supporters gathered at the 'Gandhi se Ambedkar' march, waving flags of RJD, Congress, CPI(ML), CPI(M), CPI, and VIP with a battle cry against the Modi government and the EC.

Labourer dies as rain triggers mudslide in Y'hanka

5 trees uprooted
The heavy rain uprooted five trees and led to slow-moving traffic due to water logging.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

A construction labourer died, while another was critically injured after mud caved in at an under-construction site in the Yelahanka police limits on Monday night.

The police said the workers, employed by a private real estate group, were carrying out excavation work when the mud collapsed because of heavy rain. The deceased, hailing from Andhra Pradesh, died on the spot after getting trapped under the soil. Another worker, who sustained severe injuries, has been admitted to a private hospital, the police added.

The Yelahanka police rushed to the spot after receiving an alert from other labourers at the site. An officer said the identity of the deceased is yet to be established. Heavy rain in the evening is said to have triggered the mud collapse at the construction site. P2

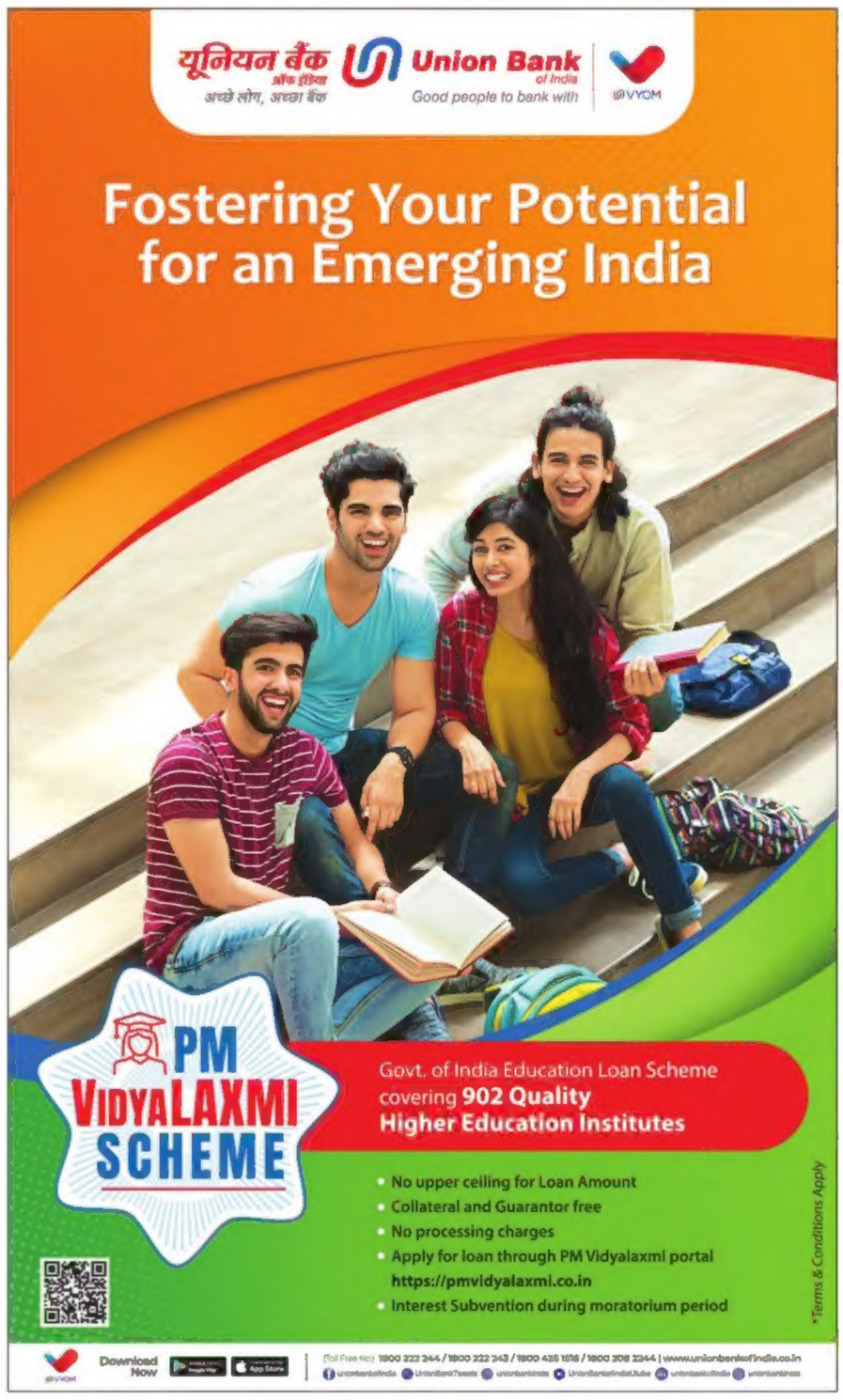
EXPRESS READ

Flood alert along banks of Kali

Bengaluru: The KPCL has issued the third and final flood warning to those living downstream of the Supa reservoir under the Kali River Project in view of release of water from the dam following heavy inflow. The government has cautioned tourists not to participate in water sports, boating and fishing in the river till the rain recedes | P5

Child marriage: 3 govt staff booked

Madikeri: An FIR has been lodged against seven accused, including three government officials, in a POCSO, child marriage and SC and ST prevention of atrocities case. The FIR has been lodged following a complaint to the state Women's Commission from the victim - a minor girl | P3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SC RULING

TET must for school teachers to remain in service

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Monday ruled that the Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET) is a mandatory requirement for appointment as teachers and for teachers in service to seek promotions.

A bench of justices Dipankar Datta and Augustine George Masih said in their verdict that teachers with more than five years to retire, must qualify for the TET within two years to remain in service. Otherwise, they may quit or apply for compulsory retirement with terminal benefits, the bench stated.

The court offered relief to those who have less than five years to retire, saying they need not qualify the TET. However, they will not be eligible for promotion.

The bench delivered the verdict after hearing a batch of petitions, including those from Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, regarding whether the TET is mandatory for teaching service.

One of the appellants, Anjuman Ishaat-e-Taleem Trust (a recognised minority education society), had also moved the SC against the State of Maharashtra in the case.

The question of whether the State can mandate TET for minority institutions and how it would affect their rights was referred to a larger Bench by the top court.

"We hold that the provisions of the RTE Act have to be complied with by all schools as defined in Section 2(n) of the RTE Act, except the schools established and administered by the minority, whether religious or linguistic, till such time the reference is decided and subject to the answers to the questions formulated," the order said.